

TERROR



NO. 46

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TALES FROM THE CRYPT[®]

FEATURING...



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



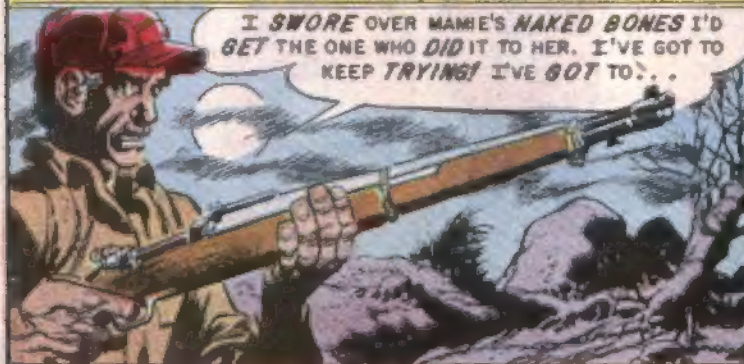
THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! WELCOME, YOU DEAR LITTLE MORBID MONSTERS, TO MY NEW TERROR-TITLE! E.C.'S GRUESOME THREESOME IS NOW A REVOLTING FOURSOME, AS "THE CRYPT OF TERROR" JOINS WITH "THE VAULT OF HORROR," "THE HAUNT OF FEAR," AND "TALES FROM THE CRYPT" TO BRING YOU HEAPING HELPINGS OF HORROR IN THE OFT-IMITATED E.C. TRADITION. I TRUST YOU'LL BE AMPLY SICKENED BY THIS LATEST COLLECTION OF CADAVEROUS CAVORTINGS. AS OF NOW, ALL IS AT PEACE AT THE E.C. OFFICES, BUT I EXPECT TROUBLE WHEN THE VAULT-KEEPER AND THE OLD WITCH REALIZE THAT I NOW HAVE TWO MUCK-MAGS TO THEIR ONE! OH, WELL, THERE'S NO USE SLAUGHTERING YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE YOU COME TO THE BURNED BRIDGES. SO, COME INTO THE CRYPT OF TERROR... AND YOUR HOST IN HOWLS AND HEAVES... YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER... WILL LAUNCH MY NEW NAUSEATING NEWSPRINT-NARCOTIC WITH THE BLOOD-CURDLING, SPINE-TINGLING YELP-YARN I CALL!

UPON REFLECTION



CHESTER WAYNE TRUDGED TREMULOUSLY ALONG THE MACADAM ROAD LEADING FROM PLAINSVILLE. HIS HIGH-POWERED RIFLE WAS READY, HIS NERVOUS FINGER ON THE TRIGGER. ABOVE, A FULL ROUND MOON THREW A PALE LIGHT ON THE COUNTRYSIDE, SILHOUETTING EACH SHADY BUSH INTO AN OMINOUS CROUCHING FIGURE. AROUND HIM, EACH FAINT WHISPER OF WIND WARNED, "GO BACK! GO BACK!"...



I SWORE OVER MAMIE'S NAKED BONES I'D GET THE ONE WHO DID IT TO HER. I'VE GOT TO KEEP TRYING! I'VE GOT TO...

THINKING OF MAMIE MADE CHESTER MAD AND DROVE HIM ON. HE WAS ROUNDING A TURN WHEN HE SAW IT NOT FORTY FEET AHEAD. HE STOPPED ABRUPTLY AND CALLED OUT TO THE BLACK-CLOAKED HULK IN THE SHALLOW ROAD-SIDE DITCH...



WHO...WHO'S THERE?

THE STARTLED CREATURE TURNED FROM ITS HUMAN PREY. A CLAMMY SWEAT BROKE OUT ON CHESTER WHEN HE SAW THE HAIRY FACE, THE BLOOD DRIPPING FROM ITS LIPS AND CHIN...



GAGGG! OH, LORD...

THE WEREWOLF BARED ITS FANGS AT THE HUNTER AND SNARLED. CHESTER DROPPED TO ONE KNEE, THREW THE RIFLE TO HIS SHOULDER AND SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER. A HOLLOW-NOSED .33 SHRIEKED ACROSS THE ROAD AFTER THE NOW-FLEEING BEAST...



HIT HIM! FOR MAMIE! RIP HIM OPEN!

HE WAS NUMB WITH HORROR, HALF-BLIND WITH RAGE AS HE BLASTED AWAY AT THE DISAPPEARING MONSTER TILL THE MAGAZINE WAS EMPTY AND THE HAMMER CLICKED DEAD ON THE EMPTY RIFLE CHAMBER...



MISSED HIM... SOB... MAMIE! I...SOB... MISSED...

LOATH TO LOOK UPON THE GORY REMAINS THAT LAY IN THE DITCH, CHESTER WAS NEVERTHELESS DRAWN TOWARD THEM AS THOUGH BY SOME MAGNET OF MORBIDITY. HE APPROACHED ON TREMBLING LEGS... LOOKED... THEN RECOILED IN HORROR AT THE SIGHT OF BARE BONE AND RAW, HALF-EATEN FLESH...



CHOKES...

A GREAT VIOLENT SICKNESS WRENCHED AT CHESTER'S INNARDS... AND HE TURNED, RETCHING, AND RAN THE WHOLE WAY BACK TO PLAINSVILLE...



THE MEN IN MARLEY'S TAVERN
LEAPED TO THEIR FEET AS CHESTER
BURST THROUGH THE DOOR,
HEADED FOR THE BAR. THEY SAW
THE RIFLE AND THE LOOK ON HIS
FACE AND THEY KNEW...

WHO...WHO WAS
IT *THIS* TIME,
CHET?

QUICK, FRANK!
POUR ME SOME-
THIN' STRAIGHT!



CHESTER TOSSED OFF A DOUBLE
BOURBON... AND WHILE IT WAS STILL
BURNING DOWN, HE PANTED OUT THE
TERRIBLE DETAILS OF HIS HARROW-
ING EXPERIENCE...

GOD, MAN!
TELL US WHO
IT WAS! WE'VE
ALL GOT
FAMILIES!

A FARMER... HAS A
PLACE THREE MILES
OUT... SEEN HIM IN
TOWN... NICE GUY...
QUIET. HE'S GONNA
BE QUIET A LONG,
LONG TIME NOW...
LIKE MY MAMIE!



AT FIRST THE MEN EXCHANGED
GUILTY GLANCES OF RELIEF, BUT
AFTER A FEW MOMENTS OF BROODING
SILENCE, PAUL MYERS CLIMBED ONTO
A TABLE AND SHOUTED...

THAT MAKES *FIVE* VICTIMS IN AS
MANY MONTHS... AND *WHY?* AIN'T
WE *PAYIN'* FOR PROTECTION IN
THIS ROTTEN TOWN? ALL WE GET
FROM MAYOR HANSON IS *PROMISES*.
DO WE WAIT TILL THAT WEREWOLF
GRABS SOMEONE *CLOSE* TO US
BEFORE WE MAKE HANSON DO
SOMETHING!?



IT *ALREADY*
GOT SOMEONE
CLOSE TO ME,
PAUL! MY
WIFE...
MAMIE!

THAT GIVES YOU
MORE RIGHT TO
TELL THE MAYOR
OFF, CHET. YOU LEAD
THE WAY AND WE'LL
BACK YOU UP!



FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, MAYOR
ELWOOD HANSON WAS AWAKENED BY
SHOUTS OF HIS NAME. HE LEANED
UNEASILY FROM THE BEDROOM WIN-
DOW OF HIS COLONIAL HOME AND
LOOKED DOWN AT THE ANGRY CROWD
BELOW...

PLEASE, GENTLEMEN!
MY WIFE IS ASLEEP!

THEN COME
ON DOWN,
MAYOR!



SOON, HIS PORTLY PAJAMA-CLAD
FIGURE WRAPPED IN A SILKEN ROBE,
THE DIGNIFIED MAYOR OF PLAINS-
VILLE STOOD BEFORE HIS TOWNS-
PEOPLE, LISTENING TO THE FRIGHT-
FUL NEWS...

TERRIBLE! TERRIBLE!
I'LL SEND OFFICIAL CON-
DOLENCES TO HIS WIDOW
IN THE MORN...



A FAT LOT OF GOOD *THAT'LL*
DO, MAYOR! WHAT ABOUT
THE *PROTECTION* YOU
PROMISED US?

WHAT CAN I DO, MR.
WAYNE? FOR *ONE*
THING, THIS FIENDISH
ATTACK TOOK PLACE
OUTSIDE OF TOWN...
BEYOND MY JURISDIC-
TION.



MY *WIFE'S* BODY WAS
RAVAGED *RIGHT HERE*
ON THE *STREETS* OF
PLAINSVILLE!

WE WANT
MORE THAN
WORDS, MAYOR!

WHAT'RE
YOU GOING
TO DO
ABOUT IT,
HANSON?



MAYOR HANSON TRIED TO PACIFY THE ROILED MOB...

PLEASE, GENTLEMEN! NOW, MR. WAYNE, YOU SAY YOU FIRED SEVERAL SILVER BULLETS AT THIS WEREWOLF... THEY WERE SILVER BULLETS, OF COURSE!

SILVER? I DON'T GET YOU, MAYOR. I USED HOLLOW-NOSED .33'S. LEAD. NOT SILVER. THEY'RE LIKE DUM-DUMS...

MAYOR HANSON WAS VERY ADEPT AT SHIFTING THE PRESSURE FROM HIMSELF...

WELL, I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN SOMEONE WOULD GO OFF HALF-COCKED! MY DEAR MR. WAYNE... IF YOU'D TAKEN THE TROUBLE TO READ UP ON WEREWOLVES AS I HAVE, YOU'D KNOW THAT ONLY A SILVER BULLET CAN KILL A WEREWOLF!

THE CROWD FELL SILENT WITH EMBARRASSMENT, FOR NO MAN WISHED TO ADMIT IGNORANCE TO HIS NEIGHBOR. MAYOR HANSON SMILED PATRONIZINGLY...

I'LL WELCOME ANYONE OF YOU TO MY LIBRARY WHO'D CARE TO INFORM HIMSELF ON THE HABITS OF THE LYCANTHROPE. MEANWHILE, MY FELLOW CITIZENS, BE CALM... AND... GOOD-NIGHT...



THE MAYOR WENT BACK INTO HIS STATELY HOME, THE CROWD DISPERSED, AND CHESTER WAYNE JOINED PAUL MYERS AND CHICK ROGERS IN A GLOOMY SESSION AT MARLEY'S TAVERN...

THERE NEVER WAS A MAN BETTER AT SQUIRMING OUT OF A HOT SPOT THAN MAYOR HANSON!

WE'RE NO BETTER OFF THAN BEFORE WE CALLED ON HIM!



CHESTER WAYNE GRIMACED...

YES, WE ARE! WE HAVE TIME... A WHOLE MONTH BEFORE THE NEXT FULL MOON. WE CAN START MELTING DOWN SILVER COINS FOR BULLETS! WE CAN BE READY THE NEXT TIME THAT WEREWOLF SHOWS HIMSELF...



SO MOST OF THE PEOPLE OF PLAINSVILLE LIVED IN DREAD OF THE COMING FULL MOON... AND THE NIGHT IT ARRIVED, EVERYONE STAYED BEHIND LOCKED DOORS AND SHUTTERED WINDOWS. ONLY CLARA HANSON, THE MAYOR'S WIFE, VENTURED OUT TO VISIT HER AGED AND AILING MOTHER...

I'VE GOT TO BE RUNNING ALONG, MAMA ELWOOD WILL BE WORRYING ABOUT ME! PROMISE YOU'LL TAKE IT EASY...

WHAT ELSE COULD I DO IN THIS WHEELCHAIR, CLARA?



IT WAS JUST THREE SHORT BLOCKS FROM HER MOTHER'S HOUSE TO THE HANSON HOME. CLARA WALKED, UNAFAID, UNTIL SHE SAW THE FULL YELLOW MOON HANGING HIGH ABOVE THE VILLAGE SQUARE...

GULP... THANK HEAVENS IT'S NOT FAR!



CLARA HANSON HURRIED HER STEPS, FINDING SOME LITTLE COMFORT AS THE QUICK CLICKING OF HER HEELS ALONG THE DESERTED SIDEWALK KEPT TIME WITH THE RAPID BEATING OF HER RACING HEART. SHE'D REACHED THE SQUARE, ONLY ONE BLOCK FROM HOME, WHEN SHE HEARD THE TERRIFYING SNARL. SHE SPUN AROUND... HER BLOOD TURNING TO ICE IN HER VEINS...



HER ATTEMPTED SCREAM CAME FORTH AS NO MORE THAN AN ASTHMATIC WHEEZING SQUEAL. THE FLESH-STARVED BEAST SPRANG... SINKING ITS GLEAMING FANGS INTO HER THROBBING THROAT... RIPPING IT OPEN... FOUNTAINING THE BLOOD OVER ITS HAIRY FACE... INTO ITS RED BOILING EYES...



WHILE JUST ACROSS THE SQUARE, IN MARLEY'S TAVERN, CHESTER WAYNE AND PAUL MYERS WERE FORTIFYING THEMSELVES AT THE BAR...



WE'RE *READY* FOR 'IM *THIS* TIME, FRANK! YEP! GOT *SILVER BULLETS* IN OUR RIFLES...

THA'S *RIGHT*, FRANK!

HMMPH! FAT LOT OF GOOD YOU'RE DOIN' TALKIN' ABOUT IT *HERE!* IF YOU'RE GOIN' *AFTER* HIM, GO! IF YOU'RE *SCARED* THEN ADMIT IT AND *QUIT BULLIN'!*

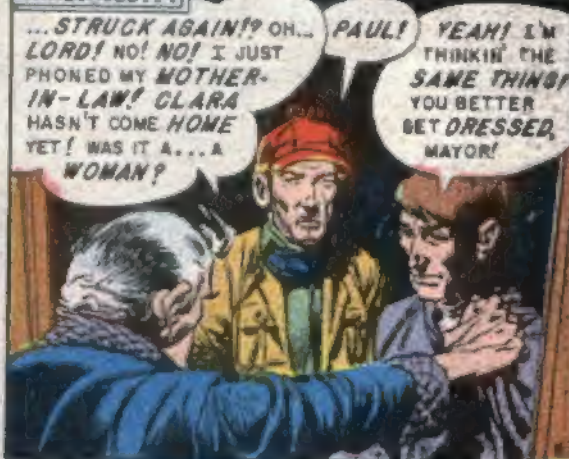
SHEEPISHLY, THEY PICKED UP THEIR SILVER-BULLET-LOADED CARBINES AND STALKED FROM THE TAVERN, ACROSS THE SQUARE. THEY GOT NO FURTHER THAN WHERE THE GHASTLY SKELETON OF CLARA HANSON LAY IN A POOL OF CONGEALING BORE, HER BLOOD SOAKED CLOTHES STREWN ABOUT...



PAUL...CHOKE...

WE'RE...WE'RE *TOO LATE!* O'MON! LET'S GET THE *MAYOR*. LET'S MAKE HIM *SEE* FOR HIMSELF!

MAYOR HANSON WAS PLAINLY TROUBLED WHEN HE FACED THE TWO WHITE-FACED MEN ACROSS HIS THRESHOLD...



...*STRUCK AGAIN!*? OH... LORD! NO! NO! I JUST PHONED MY *MOTHER-IN-LAW!* CLARA HASN'T COME *HOME* YET! WAS IT A...A *WOMAN?*

PAUL!

YEAH! I'M THINKIN' THE *SAME THING!* YOU BETTER BET *DRESSED*, MAYOR!

THE MAYOR RECOGNIZED HIS WIFE'S CLOTHES AT ONCE. WITH MUCH LOUD WAILING AND ANGUISHED SOBS, HE FELL ACROSS HER FLESH-STRIPPED BONES...

CLARA... SOB... MY CLARA...

ALL THAT CARRYIN' ON WON'T HELP HER NONE...

LEAVE HIM ALONE, PAUL!

AT LAST THE MAYOR AROSE AND HIS TEAR-REDDENED EYES BLAZED

THAT FILTHY VILE THING! I'LL GET EVERY ABLE-BODIED MAN IN THIS TOWN AFTER IT!

THIS TIME IT'S YOUR WIFE, AND THE SHOE'S ON THE OTHER FOOT!

LAY OFF, WILL YOU, PAUL!

EVERY MAN WILL BE ARMED! THERE'LL BE SILVER BULLETS FOR ALL! A VIGILANTE COMMITTEE, THAT'S WHAT WE'LL HAVE! WE'LL DIVIDE INTO GROUPS... COMB THE COUNTRYSIDE! COME THE NEXT FULL MOON... WE'LL BE WAITING!

WITHIN TWENTY- EIGHT DAYS, EVERY CAPABLE MAN IN PLAINS-VILLE HAD RECEIVED A RIFLE AND FIVE SILVER BULLETS. EVERYONE HAD PRACTISED WITH MOVING TARGETS. EVERYONE WAS READY. THE AFTERNOON BEFORE THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON, THE MEN THROGGED BEFORE MAYOR HANSON'S MANSION...

WE'LL START NOW... IN GROUPS OF SIX... IN DAYLIGHT... SO WE CAN ACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH EACH AREA! NOW, REMEMBER...

...STAY CLOSE TOGETHER AND MAKE SURE OF WHAT YOU'RE SHOOTING AT! WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING MOVE, MAKE CERTAIN IT ISN'T ONE OF YOUR OWN PARTY. PAIR UP! ONE MAN USE A LIGHT WHILE THE OTHER MAN DOES THE SHOOTING! WE DON'T WANT ANY INNOCENT PEOPLE KILLED!

IT WAS TWILIGHT WHEN MAYOR HANSON, WEARING A RED SUEDE SHOOTING JACKET AND SCARLET HUNTER'S CAP, CLIMBED FROM HIS CAR AT THE RENDEZVOUS SPOT FOR HIS GROUP. CHESTER WAYNE GRINNED...

PIPE THE FANCY OUTFIT ON HIS HONOR, PAUL. YOU COULD SEE IT IN A COAL MINE AT MIDNIGHT...

HUNTING IN THE DARK IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS, MR. WAYNE. I'D RATHER BE SAFE THAN SORRY...

WHEN DARKNESS CAME, THE MEN WERE ALERT AND JUMPY! MATT STEVENS, WITH HIS GROUP IN TOWN, SAW A SUSPICIOUS FIGURE, SCREAMED OUT AFTER IT, AND BEGAN SHOOTING...

CUT THAT OUT, MATT! THE MAYOR SAID TO MAKE SURE WHAT YOU'RE SHOOTING AT!

LUCKILY, MATT'S SHOTS WERE WILD. THE FIGURE TURNED OUT TO BE A FAMILIAR DRUNK THEY ALL KNEW WELL...

WELL, WHAT'D YOU RUN FOR IF YOU AREN'T THE WERE-WOLF?

I AIN'T SHO SOUSED I'M GONNA BE A SITTING DUCK WHEN SOMEONE OPENS UP ON ME, MATT SHTEVENS!



MEANWHILE, MAYOR HANSON AND HIS PARTY'D SURROUNDED A STRANGE OLD WOMAN WALKING ALONG A LONELY DARK ROAD...

LADY, YOU'RE TAKING A CHANCE BEING OUT TONIGHT! BETTER LET US SEE YOU HOME!

I DON'T NEED T'BE SEED HOME! I AIN'T SKEERED!



PAUL MYERS STUDIED THE OLD HAG.

HOLD ON, MAYOR! WHO SAYS THE WEREWOLF'S GOT TO BE A MAN? I'VE SEEN THIS QUEER DAME AROUND. I NEVER LIKED HER LOOKS!

MAYBE YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING THERE, MYERS. I HADN'T THOUGHT OF A FEMALE WEREWOLF!



MAYOR HANSON AND PAUL MYERS REVEALED THEIR THEORY TO THE OTHERS OF THEIR PARTY...

WELL, HOW CAN WE TELL IF SHE IS THE WEREWOLF?

WE'LL TAKE HER BACK TO MY PLACE! I HAVE THAT BOOK! IT TELLS HOW TO RECOGNIZE A WEREWOLF... EVEN IN HUMAN FORM!



CHET WAYNE BRANDISHED HIS RIFLE AND SCOFFED...

AW, NUTS TO YOUR BOOK, MAYOR. IN LESS THAN TWENTY MINUTES, THE MOON WILL BE FULL. THEN, IF THE OLD BAG TURNS OUT TO BE WHAT WE'RE AFTER, WE LET HER HAVE IT!

... AND IF SHE DOESN'T, THEN WE'VE WASTED VALUABLE TIME... PERHAPS EVEN LET THE REAL WEREWOLF ESCAPE...



THEY MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO THE MAYOR'S CAR. THE OLD HAG FOUGHT THEM AS THEY TRIED TO PUSH HER IN. SHE EVEN BIT PAUL'S HAND...

OWWWW... THE DIRTY WITCH!

I AIN'T GOIN'! YOU CAIN'T MAKE ME GO!



PAUL SOLVED THE PROBLEM. HE SWUNG HIS RIFLE-BUTT, CLOUTING THE OLD WOMAN ACROSS THE SIDE OF HER HEAD.

THIS... THIS IS KIDNAPPING! AFTER ALL... WE STILL HAVE NO PROOF! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE HIT HER...

AHH, CLIMB OFF MY BACK, MAYOR! AND STEP ON IT! SHE'S OUT COLD!



IT TOOK HIM OVER FIFTEEN MINUTES TO REACH THE MAYOR'S HOUSE IN TOWN. BY THAT TIME, THE OLD HAG HAD REVIVED...

I'LL GET THE BOOK AND COME RIGHT OUT! HOLD HER!

I STILL THINK YOU'RE CRAZY, HANSON! IN LESS THAN THREE MINUTES THE MOON WILL BE FULL... AND THEN WE'LL KNOW FOR SURE!



MAYOR HANSON HURRIED INTO THE HOUSE, STUMBLING DOWN THE DIMLY LIT HALL TO THE DARK LIBRARY. HE STOPPED SUDDENLY AS HE REACHED THE DOOR...AND STARED AT THE GLEAMING EYES BURNING IN THE BLACKNESS BEYOND...

WHAT THE...! SOME-ONE'S IN THERE! IT'S... IT'S...



MAYOR HANSON MOVED FORWARD SLOWLY, HIS RIFLE READY. THEN, ALL AT ONCE, HE SAW IT...THE HAIRY FACE...THE GLEAMING FANGS FLASHING FROM BEHIND THE SNARLING CRUEL MOUTH. HE SCREAMED...

IT'S THE WEREWOLF!



HE FIRED, POINT-BLANK, AGAIN AND AGAIN. THE VILE FEROCIOUS BEAST JUST STOOD THERE...SNARLING AT HIM...

MY GOD! THE SILVER BULLETS! THEY DON'T KILL HIM! I COULDN'T MISS...NOT AT THIS RANGE...



OUTSIDE, THE MEN HEARD THE SHOTS AND TORE FOR THE HOUSE...THE MAYOR STUMBLED TO THE LIBRARY LIGHT SWITCH, FLICKING IT ON. HE SHRIEKED AS THE GLOW FLOODED THE ROOM...

YAAAAAHHHHH!! IN THERE! THE LIBRARY! IT'S THE MAYOR! HE'S PROBABLY BEING ATTACKED BY THE WEREWOLF!



MAYOR ELWOOD HANSON STOOD BEFORE THE FULL-LENGTH LIBRARY MIRROR, SNARLING AND SHRIEKING, STARING IDIOTICALLY AT THE BULLET HOLES HE'D MADE WHEN HE'D SHOT AT HIS OWN REFLECTION...

GOOD LORD!

CHOKES!



AND THAT'S THE FIRST SCREAM-STORY IN MY NEW PUTRID PERIODICAL, FIENDS. NATURALLY, THEY SHOT MAYOR WEREWOLF AFTER THAT. IN FACT THEY PUMPED HIM SO FULL OF SILVER BULLETS, HE HAD TO BE LOWERED INTO HIS GRAVE WITH A DERRICK! THEN A COUPLE OF GRAVE-ROBBERS HEARD ABOUT THE SILVER...AND...BUT THAT'S

ANOTHER STORY!

I'LL DIG THAT UP SOME OTHER TIME. NOW THE VAULT-KEEPER AWAITS WITH HIS CREEPY CONTRIBUTION TO THIS MORBID MESS. I'LL BE BACK LATER. 'BYE, NOW.



THE VAULT OF HORROR!

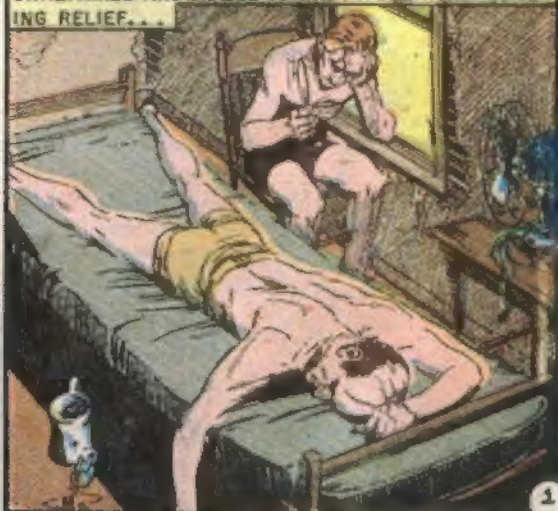
HEH, HEH! AND NOW THAT C.K. HAS CURDLED YOUR ANEMIC BLOOD, IT'S TIME FOR YOUR HOST IN THE VAULT OF HORROR, THE VAULT-KEEPER... NAMELY, ME... TO ENTERTAIN YOU WITH A SPINE-TINGLING, NAUSEATING NOVELETTE FROM MY CREEP COLLECTION. LET'S SEE! OH... LET'S NOT SEE! YES! THIS IS A GOOD GORY ONE! IT'S CALLED...

BLIND ALLEYS

THE "HOME" WAS OLD AND PAINT-STARVED AND DRAFTY AND BADLY IN NEED OF REPAIR. THE ROOF LEAKED AND THE WINDOWS RATTLED AND WERE COVERED WITH YEARS OF DUST AND GRIME. THE INMATES OF THE HOME WALKED GRIM-FACED AND SILENT THROUGH CRACKED PLASTER HALLS, OR SAT IN DINGY ROOMS ON CRAWLING BEDS. THEY SHIVERED IN THE COLD WHEN WINTER CAME... WHEN THERE WAS NO STEAM TO WARM THE RUSTED RADIATORS...



...AND THEY SWELTERED IN THE HEAT WHEN SUMMER BURNED... WHEN LONG-BROKEN FANS LAY IDLE AND UNREPAIRED AND UNABLE TO WAFT A BREATH OF COOLING RELIEF...



BUT THEY COULD NOT *SEE* THE PAINT-PEELED WALLS...THE DIRT CLOUDED WINDOWS...THE DUSTY AND COB-WEBBED HALLS OF THIS, THEIR HOME...THESE INMATES, THEY COULD NOT *SEE* THE ROACHES AND THE RATS SCAMPERING ACROSS THE UNWASHED FLOORS...



... AS *THIS* WAS A "HOME" FOR THE *BLIND*...FOR *WRETCHED SOULS* WHO *LIVED* IN WORLDS OF *DARKNESS*...WHO STARED WITH *UNSEEING* EYES AT THE MISERY AROUND THEM... AND YET *KNEW* AND *HATED* ALL OF IT...



FOR THE LOSS OF *ONE* SENSE ONLY TENOS TO *SHARPEN* THE *OTHERS*... TO *TUNE* THEM MORE *FINELY*...TO MAKE THEM MORE *AGUTE*. THE INMATES *KNEW* BECAUSE THEY COULD *TASTE*...AND *TOUCH*...AND *SMELL* AND *HEAR*. THEY COULD *TASTE* THE *SPOILED* AND *ROTTED* FOOD PLACED BEFORE THEM AT MEALTIMES...



THEY COULD *TOUCH* THE *STICKY*, *FILMY* *COBWEBS*...THE *DUST* *LAYERS* COVERING EVERYTHING...



THEY COULD *SMELL* THE FOUL ODORS OF *MILDEW* AND *FAULTY PLUMBING* AND *POOR SANITATION* AND *NEGLECT*...



THEY COULD *HEAR* THE *RATS* SCAMPERING AND THE *ROACHES* CRAWLING AND THE *TERMITES* BURROWING AND THE *LICE* AND *BED-BUGS* AND *FLIES* AND A THOUSAND *OTHER* CREATURES OF FILTH THAT MOVED...



AND THEY COULD HEAR *OTHER* CREATURES TOO .. *OTHER* CREATURES OF FILTH THAT MOVED. THEY COULD HEAR *MR. GRUNWALD*, THE HOME'S DIRECTOR, IN HIS OFFICE-APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS, ENTERTAINING HIS LATEST LADY-FRIEND WITH THE MONEY HE'D SAVED ON THEM.. THE INMATES..



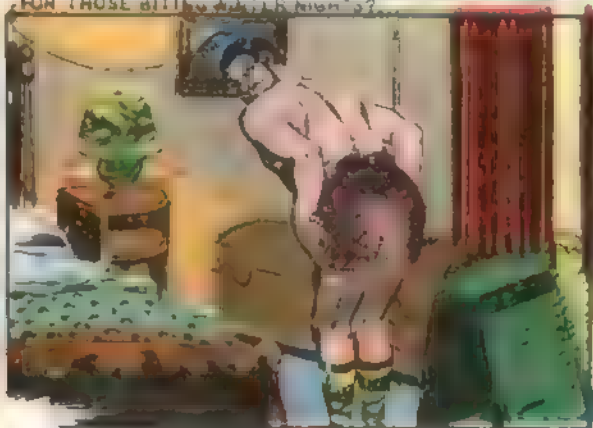
THEY COULD HEAR HIS ALMOST MANIACAL LAUGHTER AND THE CLINKING OF CHAMPAGNE GLASSES. THEY COULD SMELL THE MOUTH-WATERING ODORS OF THE LAVISH SUPPER HE WAS ENJOYING, AND THEY COULD SEE, IN THEIR MINDS' EYES, THE LUXURIES WITH WHICH HE'D SELFISHLY SURROUNDED HIMSELF AT THEIR EXPENSE ..



YES, GUNNER GRUNWALD HAD **INDEED** SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH LUXURIES...PAID FOR WITH THE **ALLOTMENTS** GIVEN HIM FOR EACH BLIND INMATE. WHY **PAINT** AND **PLASTER** DREARY HALLS THAT **THEY'D** NEVER **SEE**, WHEN **HE** COULD HAVE AN **AIR-CONDITIONER** FOR THOSE BLISTERING SUMMER DAYS?



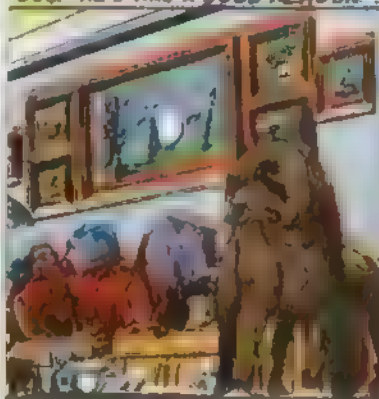
WHY **LAUNDRER SHEETS** AND **BLANKETS** AND **CLOTHES** OF **DIRT-SMEARS** AND **SWEAT-STAINS** THAT **THEY'D** NEVER SEE WHEN **HE** COULD HAVE A **HEATER** FOR THOSE BITING WINTER NIGHTS?



WHY GIVE THOSE POOR MISERABLE BLIND FOOLS **BEAUTY** IF THEY COULD NOT **APPRECIATE** **BEAUTY**? GUNNER GRUNWALD'D **FELT** THAT WAY! SO HE'D **SKIMPED** ON THE INMATES...**CUT CORNERS** **HERE**... **DENIED** **THERE**... AND WITH THE **SURPLUS**, HE'D SUPPLIED HIMSELF WITH **BEAUTY**...



FINE **FURNITURE**...**GOOD BOOKS**...**PLUSH RUGS**...**EXPENSIVE DRAPES**...AN OCCASIONAL EVENING OF **FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP**...THEY WERE **ALL** GUNNER'S TO ENJOY. HE'D EVEN BOUGHT A **DOG**...A **VICIOUS** **DOG**. HE'D HAD A **GOOD REASON**...



FOR GUNNER'D KNOWN THAT **ANOTHER** SENSE HAD REPLACED THE INMATES' SENSE OF **SIGHT**...A **DEEP-SEEDED** SENSE...**GROWING** EACH DAY. HE'D SEEN IT IN THEIR WEBBED-**BLIND EYES**, IN THEIR SILENT GRIM **FACES**. HE'D SEEN THEIR **GROWING HATE** SO HE'D BOUGHT THE **DOG** FOR **PROTECTION**...



AND WITH THE **DOG** AT HIS SIDE, GUNNER'D WALKED **SELF-CONFIDENTLY** BEFORE THEM, KNOWING THAT HIS **SIGHT** AND THE **DOG'S** STRENGTH WOULD KEEP HIM FROM **HARM**.



AND SO, HE'D BEEN ABLE TO **CONTINUE** TO ENJOY HIS FIENDISH LITTLE AMUSEMENTS...LIKE **TRIPPING** **HELPLESS** UNSUSPECTING INMATES AS THEY'D TOTTER BLINDLY BY HIM...



...OR REMOVING SOMETHING THAT THEY'D COME TO KNOW WAS THERE AND COUNTED ON...



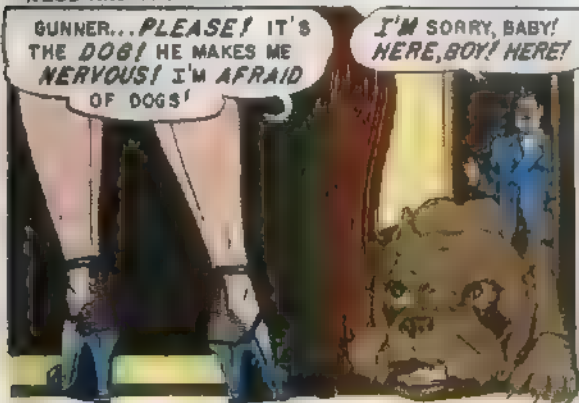
...OR ADDING SOMETHING NEW...



...OR BEING JUST MEAN.



YES, GUNNER'D AMUSED HIMSELF WITH HIS CHARGES INABILITY TO SEE. HE'D BEEN SADISTIC WITH HIS TORTURES. AND HE'D GROWN FAT ON HIS DENIALS. AND HIS CHARGES HAD SAT IN THEIR WORLD OF DARKNESS AND WAITED LISTENING.



...LISTENING FOR THEIR OPPORTUNITY



...AND TONIGHT...THEIR OPPORTUNITY CAME...



...SO THEY LURED THE DOG DOWN INTO THE OLD MUSTY CELLAR OF THE HOME WITH SOME MEAT-SCRAPS THEY'D SAVED FROM THEIR SCANT MEALS...



AND THEN THEY WAITED. THEY WAITED FOR GUNNER'S FRIEND OF THE EVENING TO LEAVE...



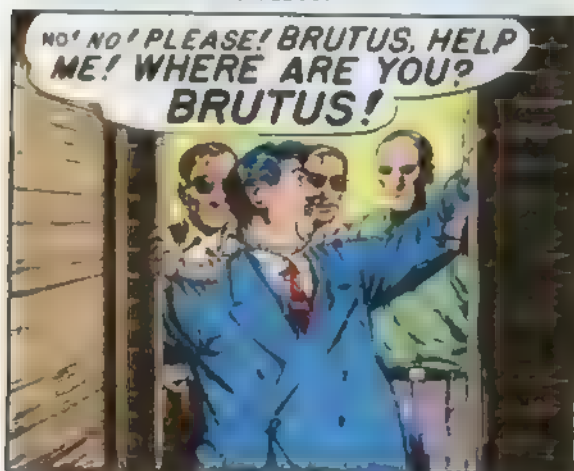
THEY WAITED FOR GUNNER TO MISS HIS DOG...



...AND THEN THEY STRUCK! BLINDLY. UNSEEING... THEY SURROUNDED THEIR HATED ENEMY...



...AND DRAGGED HIM TO THE CELLAR TOO...TO ANOTHER WAITING CUBICLE...



BUT GUNNER'S ONLY ANSWER WAS THE SOFT WHINE OF THE DOG IN THE ADJOINING CUBICLE...



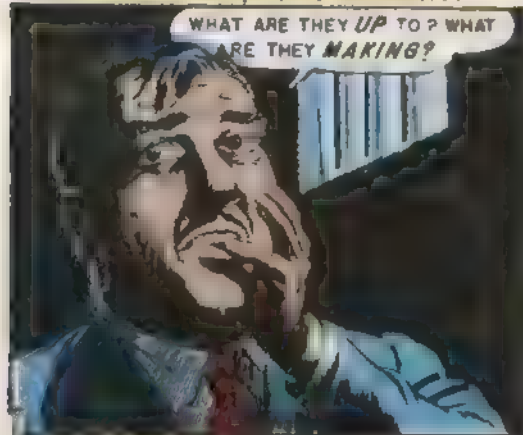
THEN THEY BEGAN TO WORK. THEY DRAGGED OUT OLD HAMMERS AND RUSTY NAILS AND LONG IDLE SAWS



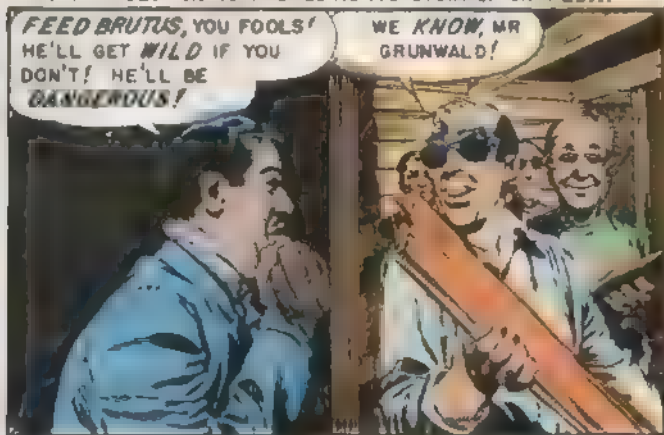
AND THEY WENT THROUGH THE HOME AND CUT AND RIPPED AND CHOPPED THE LUMBER THEY NEEDED...



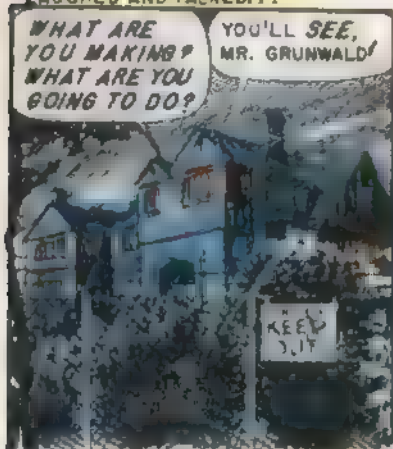
GUNNER LISTENED TO THE HAMMERING ECHOING THROUGH THE CELLAR. HE LISTENED TO THEIR GIGGLES AND CHATTER, AND HE WONDERED...



AND HE LISTENED AS THE NIGHT PASSED AND DAWN CAME AND THE DOG IN THE CUBICLE NEXT DOOR GREW HUNGRY AND PACED AND GROWLED AND SCRATCHED AS ITS STOMACH GNAWED...



THE DAY PASSED AND NIGHT CAME AGAIN. GUNNER'S OWN STOMACH ACHED WITH HUNGER. AND STILL THEY HAMMERED AND SAWED AND LAUGHED AND TALKED...



THE DOG IN THE NEXT CUBICLE HOWLED ALL THAT NIGHT, Slobbering and snarling and scratching. GUNNER SHUDDERED. THE DOG WAS A BEAST, NOW... A HUNGER-CRAZED BEAST. AND THE HAMMERING WENT ON...



DAWN CAME AGAIN AND THE SECOND DAY PASSED. NEXT DOOR, THE DOG WAS FIGHTING WITH ITSELF, THROWING ITSELF AGAINST THE CUBICLE SIDES AND HOWLING MADLY...



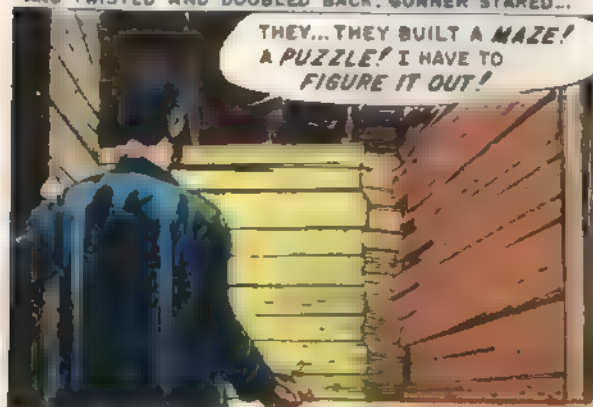
GUNNER HIMSELF WAS HALF-CRAZED WITH HUNGER AS THE THIRD NIGHT CAME. AND THEN, TOWARDS MIDNIGHT, THE HAMMERING STOPPED. THE CELLAR WAS SUDDENLY FLOODED WITH LIGHT. EVEN BRUTUS STOPPED SNARLING IN ANTICIPATION.



THEY STOOD BEFORE HIM... DIRTY, SWEATED, TIRED FROM LONG HOURS OF LABOR... THE INMATES... THE BLIND UNSEEING CARPENTERS. GUNNER BLINKED OUT AT THEM...

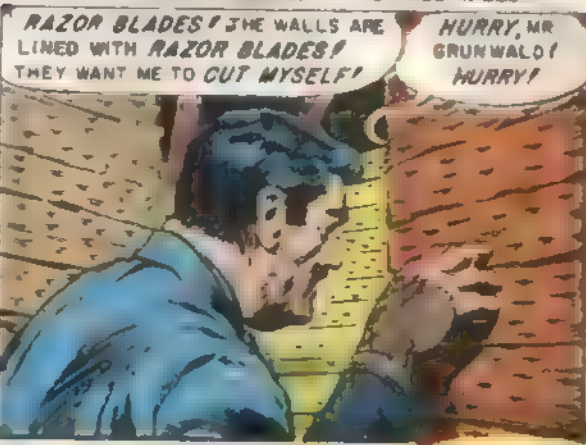


GUNNER STOOD UP AS THEY DARTED OFF. HE COULD HEAR THEIR FOOTSTEPS FADE AS THEY ROUNDED CORNERS AND RAN DOWN LONG CORRIDORS THAT TURNED AND TWISTED AND DOUBLED BACK. GUNNER STARED...



THEY... THEY BUILT A MAZE!
A PUZZLE! I HAVE TO
FIGURE IT OUT!

AND THEN GUNNER SAW THE GLEAMING GLITTERING SLIVERS OF STEEL EMBEDDED IN THE MAZE WALLS...

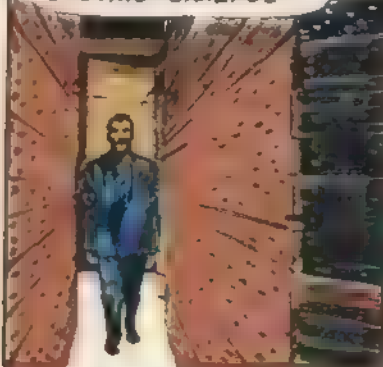


RAZOR BLADES! THE WALLS ARE
LINED WITH RAZOR BLADES!
THEY WANT ME TO CUT MYSELF!

HURRY, MR
GRUNWALD!
HURRY!

GUNNER LAUGHED TO HIMSELF AS
HE STARTED OUT OF HIS CUBICLE...

THE FOOLS! IF I'M CAREFUL...
IF I TAKE MY TIME... I'LL
NEVER HAVE TO TOUCH THE
WALLS... JUST WALK SLOWLY
LIKE THIS CAREFUL



A SOUND BEHIND GUNNER FROZE
HIS BLOOD! A SNARL AND A SQUEAK
OF A DOOR OPENING...

BRUTUS! HUNGER-CRAZED
BRUTUS! THEY'VE FREED
HIM TOO!

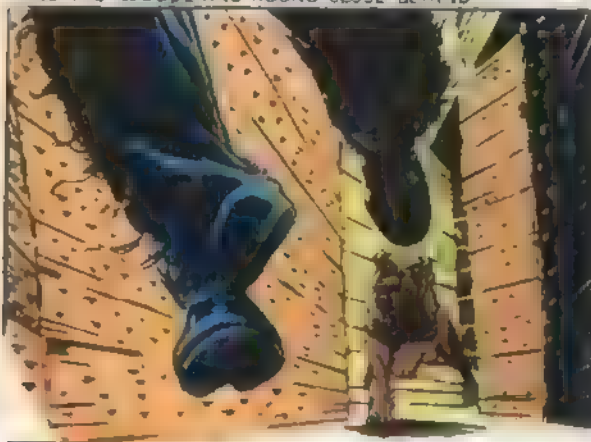


GUNNER BEGAN TO RUN. HE HAD TO
REACH FREEDOM BEFORE THAT
STARVED DOG CAUGHT HIM! HE RAN
DOWN THE TWISTING MAZE CORRI-
DORS. THE SOUND OF THE LOPING
SNARLING DOG BEHIND HIM

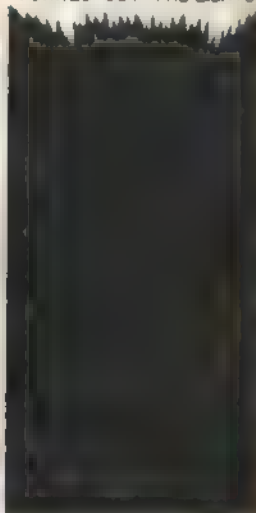


OH, LORD... LORD

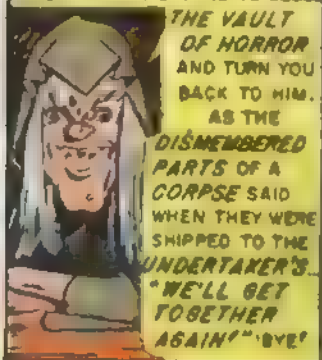
HE BRUSHED AGAINST THE RAZOR BLADES, SLASHING
HIS FLESH. HE STUMBLERED AND GOT UP. RAN ON FRIGHT-
ENED, WILD DOWN THROUGH THE TWISTING, DOUBLING-
BACK MAZE CORRIDORS WITH THE RAZOR-LINED WALLS
AND THE SLOBBERING HOUND CLOSE BEHIND



AND THEN SOME IDIOT
TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS!



DOPS! WRONG TURN, GUN-
NER! NOW, NOW! DON'T GO TO
PIECES! AFTER ALL! IT'S
ALMOST LIKE BEING BLIND!
WELL, KIDDIES. THAT'S MY
SICKENING-STORY FOR THIS
FIRST ISSUE OF G.K.'S NEW
MAG! NOW IT'S TIME TO CLOSE



THE VAULT
OF HORROR
AND TURN YOU
BACK TO HIM.
AS THE
DISMEMBERED
PARTS OF A
CORPSE SAID
WHEN THEY WERE
SHIPPED TO THE
UNDERTAKER'S
"WE'LL GET
TOGETHER
AGAIN!" "BYE!"

GONE TO SEED

It was back-breaking work, but it *had* to be done. Right away, too. He couldn't risk hiding the body of his wife in the cellar any longer . . . one of the farm hands might accidentally stumble over the corpse and start asking mighty dangerous questions. It was urgent, Dan Gret knew, to dispose of Emily right now, in this field he was plowing for spring planting. No sense in leaving a murdered wife around for the law to find!

Dan Gret heard the farm hands chattering over in the next field . . . he'd have to bawl 'em out about all this horsing around on *his* time. But at the moment he was too busy trying to gouge a hole in the ground. At first he'd been worried about the noise his shovel would make as he burrowed into the earth, but that had been taken care of without much trouble. The motor of the idling plow made so much noise that those loafers working for him wouldn't pay him any mind. And the bulk of the machine had been carefully maneuvered into place so that it acted as a shield between him and the overalled men seeding the adjoining acre. This, Dan Gret had resolved, was to be a *private* burial!

Dan Gret crouched low, in the shadow of the plow. By stretching out full length, he managed to tug the corpse from behind the grumbling machine and nudge it into the makeshift grave. There would be less than a foot of dirt blanketing Emily's body . . . but as soon as the hired hands got a day off he'd hurry back and dig a good deep hole to house the corpse. Within a few weeks the seeds'd be sprouting and the field would burst into furious bloom. Dan Gret grinned as he patted the last shovelful of dirt into place. Not only

was he getting rid of this devil he'd grown to hate . . . he was also helping to fertilize the coming crop!

He straightened up and surveyed his work with a critical eye. His eyes popped. one of Emily's hands was sticking up out of the soil! He lunged forward . . . and heard, with dread, the sound of voices approaching. Those bums who worked for him were coming across the field in his direction!

Dan Gret sprang toward the droning plow. If he could move the machine sideways just a few feet . . . set it directly over Emily's body . . . the danger of the moment could be averted. He turned once, to look back at the tell-tale mound . . . and his foot slid out from under him. His arms flailed the air frantically as he tried to regain his balance: his hand crashed sharply against the gear lever. The plow started immediately to swing in a rumbling circle, because of the way he had cramped the steering wheel. In motionless horror he saw the glittering blades bearing down on him!

Dan Gret screeched in alarm. Then the razor-sharp metal slashed through his flesh . . . the ponderous steel crunched over his writhing body . . . the huge wheels groaned over him so that he was drenched in his own gushing blood.

By the time the farm-hands reached him, Dan Gret was slashed almost beyond recognition. With gaping wonder the hired men stared down at Dan Gret's corpse . . . buried alongside that of his wife Emily, in the gory, blood spattered grave. It was a real family plot!

E.C. WENT TO SEA IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER NEW TREND...



AND WE CAME UP WITH...
SAVAGES OF THE SEA, SHIPS, PLUNDER AND...

PIRACY



NOW YOU SEARCH
FOR IT!

BUT IF YOU *CAN'T FIND PIRACY*
AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND, YOU
CAN *SUBSCRIBE!* JUST FILL OUT
THE COUPON AND MAIL, TOGETHER
WITH *ONE HUNDRED PIECES OF*
CENT (THAT'S ONE BUCK, LAND-
LUBBERS!), TO:

THE SEASICK EDITORS OF
PIRACY
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

OKAY, BILGE RATS! YOU SHANGHAIED ME!
I ENCLOSE \$1.00 FOR THE NEXT EIGHT ISSUES
OF *PIRACY!*

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZONE
NO.

A POINT OF ORDER! IF YOU'RE EXPECTING E.C.'S NEWEST HORROR MAG TO BE BETTER THAN TALES FROM THE CRYPT, THE VAULT OF HORROR, AND THE HAUNT OF FEAR, YOU'LL BE SADLY DISAPPOINTED! IT'S ONLY JUST AS GOOD!



INVESTIGATE YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND FOR THE FIRST "**JUST-AS-GOOD**" ISSUE! HOWEVER IF YOU'RE **TIED UP** WITH **RED TAPE** (ADHESIVE, THAT IS!) AND YOU'D RATHER **SUBSCRIBE**, FILL OUT THE COUPON AND SEND IN, TOGETHER WITH AN **UNDOCTORED PHOTO** OF GEORGE WASHINGTON ON A \$1.00 BILL. YOU'LL RECEIVE 8 **UNCROPPED** ISSUES IN THE MAIL.

THE CRYPT-KEEPER
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

HERE'S MY BUCK SEND ME THE NEXT 8 ISSUES OF YOUR NEWEST MAG, **THE CRYPT OF TERROR**.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ ZONE NO. _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

HERE'S HOW ONE FAILURE TURNED HIS MISERABLE LIFE INTO A HORRIBLE...

SUCCESS STORY



THE POLICE SURGEON INSERTED THE HOLLOW NEEDLE INTO ELMER'S ARM AND SECONDS LATER THE SODIUM PENTOTHAL SOLUTION WAS FLOWING INTO HIS BLOODSTREAM, TAKING ITS EFFECT. ELMER'S SHRILL MANIACAL LAUGHTER FADED INTO A WHEEZING GASP. THE RABID FURY OF HIS CONVULSIVE STRUGGLING SUBSIDED INTO HELPLESS EXHAUSTION. THE THREE BRAWNY POLICEMEN RELAXED THEIR HOLD THEN, AND MOPPED THEIR SWEAT-BEADED BROWS. ELMER PRESTON SLUMPED LIMPLY ON THE SHABBY SOFA, HIS FLACCID FACE DRAINED TO A YELLOW-GREENISH HUE. HIS USUALLY SOFT, LIQUID-BROWN EYES WERE GLAZED AND STARING NOW. HE STARTED TO SPEAK, WITHOUT EMOTION, IN A OLIVERING MONOTONE...

I'M GLAD I DID IT! IT...IT **HAD** TO BE THIS WAY. DON'T YOU **SEE?**

NO, MR. PRESTON, WE **DON'T** SEE! YOU'D BETTER **TELL** US ABOUT IT!



ELMER'S FACE TOOK ON A THOUGHTFUL EXPRESSION AND HIS EYES SHADED OVER WITH A DISTANT LOOK, HAUNTED WITH MEMORIES OF THE PAST. HE SIGHED DEEPLY, THEN SPOKE AGAIN IN A COLORLESS DRONEING VOICE...

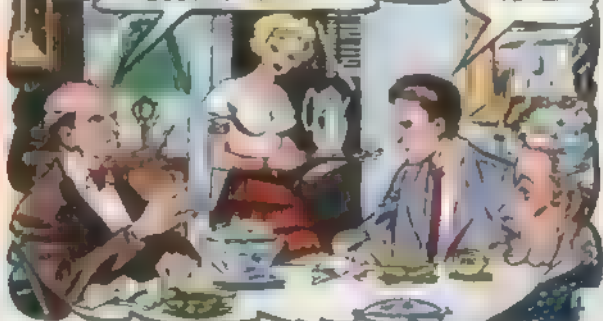
I...I WAS ALWAYS A **TIMID** MAN. IT'S NOT **GOOD** FOR A MAN TO BE **TIMID**... ESPECIALLY A **MARRIED** MAN. ESPECIALLY A MAN MARRIED TO A **WOMAN** LIKE **IDA**!



'MAYBE WE COULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY TOGETHER IN OUR LITTLE APARTMENT. IDA AND I. BUT ONE EVENING HER FOLKS CAME TO DINNER. HER FATHER WAS ALL TENSE, BURSTING WITH NEWS THAT HE FINALLY EXPLODED ON ME AT DINNER. ...'

ELMER, YOU MUST BE **WONDERING** HOW COME MIN AND I DIDN'T **GIVE** YOU TWO A **WEDDING** GIFT

WHY, NO, MR WALLACE, I **NEVER**



One Amador

SURE YOU WONDERED!
WELL, SON... WE'VE GOT
A **SURPRISE!** WE'RE
GIVING YOU A **START** ON
A **HOME** OF YOUR
OWN! **ONE THOUSAND**
DOLLARS
FOR A **DOWN**
PAYMENT...

ONE THOUSAND...
WHY, MR. WALLACE!
I **HARDLY**
KNOW WHAT
TO **SAY...**

'I SHOULD HAVE SAID, "NO THANK YOU!", BUT I SAW NO HIDDEN TRAP AT THE MOMENT. AND WHEN, EXUDING GOOD WILL, MR. WALLACE OFFERED ME HIS HAND, I CLASPED IT GRATEFULLY...

JUST BE GOOD TO MY DAUGHTER, ELMER... AND BE HAPPY TOGETHER!

TH-THANK YOU, SIR...

'NOW THAT I THINK BACK, IT SEEMS THAT IDA MUST HAVE KNOWN ALL THE TIME. BUT THAT NIGHT, SHE RAN TO HER FATHER, THREW HER ARMS AROUND HIS NECK, AND WEPT FOR JOY...

OH, DADDY! DADDY, IT'S WORTH ANY SACRIFICE TO GIVE YOU AND ELMER OUR CHILDREN A PROPER START.

'FOR AN ECSTATIC TWO WEEKS, IDA AND I HOUSE HUNTED. WE FOUND THIS PLACE... SMALL, COMFORTABLE, A DREAM COTTAGE. THE DOWN PAYMENTS FURNISHING THE PLACE EMPTIED MY BANK ACCOUNT, BUT I WAS BLISSFULLY HAPPY. THE SUNDAY AFTER WE MOVED IN, THE WALLACES CAME TO SEE OUR NEST...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MR. WALLACE...

YOU REMEMBER I SAID MIN AND I WERE MAKING A SACRIFICE TO HELP YOU GET STARTED IN YOUR OWN HOME, ELMER...

THE POINT, HERBERT! GET TO THE POINT!

THE POINT IS, ELMER, WE HAD TO GO INTO HOCK TO GET THAT THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR YOU. AND THEN MY BUSINESS SLOWED DOWN, AND... RIGHT NOW... WHAT WITH WHAT I OWE... I... I

WELL, WE'RE HAVING TROUBLE MAKING ENDS MEET, ELMER!

'I WAS BEING TAKEN FOR A WELL-PLANNED RIDE... AND MY LOVING BRIDE HAD THE STEERING WHEEL IN HER OWN LITTLE CLUTCHING HANDS...

WE CAN'T LET MOTHER AND DADDY SUFFER... NOT AFTER ALL THEY'VE DONE FOR US, CAN WE, DEAR? TELL THEM THEY'RE WELCOME TO SHARE WHAT WE HAVE UNTIL THINGS ARE BETTER. TELL THEM!

HUH...UH... THAT'S... THAT'S RIGHT! OF COURSE!

'THAT WAS THE FIRST FAINT RUMBLING OF THE TEMPEST YET TO COME. THE WALLACES GAVE UP THEIR APARTMENT AND MOVED IN WITH US. IDA WAS A MOST GENEROUS DAUGHTER...

'RIGHT IN HERE, MOTHER AND DADDY! WE'LL LET THEM HAVE OUR ROOM, ELMER. IT'S CLOSER TO THE BATHROOM, AND SINCE IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY

'TEMPORARY, SHE SAID! BUT BEFORE I KNEW IT, THEY'D BEEN THERE FIVE WEEKS. I COULD JUST ABOUT MANAGE TO MEET MY BILLS, IF THERE WEREN'T OTHER DEMANDS ON MY SMALL INCOME...

BUT, I CAN'T AFFORD A T.V. SET, MR WALLACE. NOT EVEN A SMALL-SCREEN SET'

THAT'S GRATITUDE! I GIVE YOU \$1000 FOR A HOME, AND YOU EXPECT ME TO FURNISH IT, TOO?

BELIEVE ME, I'M GRATEFUL... BUT THAT MONEY WAS JUST ENOUGH TO LET ME GO INTO DEBT FOR THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS. SADDLED WITH A MORTGAGE, I'VE GOT PAYMENTS TO MEET... ON THAT... AND THE OTHER FURNITURE... AND...

THEN A FEW MORE DOLLARS A MONTH WON'T HURT! TELL YOU WHAT! I'LL PUT THE TEN DOWN ON THE T.V. SET!

'AFTER MR WALLACE GOT HIS T.V. SET, MRS. WALLACE HAD A REQUEST.'

YOU'LL SEE, ELMER! WITH WHAT YOU SAVE ON LAUNDRY FOR THE FOUR OF US, THIS WASHING MACHINE WILL PAY FOR ITSELF!

'MONTHS WENT BY, MY BURDEN GREW AND WEIGHED UPON ME LIKE A MILLSTONE. ONE DAY I FOUND THE COURAGE TO TALK TO IDA...

I LIKE YOUR FOLKS, IDA, BUT I CAN'T GO ON SUPPORTING THEM FOR

SUPPORTING! AFTER WHAT THEY'VE DONE! WHAT A LOATH-SOME WAY TO REPAY THEM FOR THEIR GENEROSITY!

'THE CORNERS OF IDA'S MOUTH DROPPED, AND HER EYES WERE COLD AND HARD... PIERCING ME THROUGH AS SHE SPOKE ...

YOU'RE BLAMING MOTHER AND DADDY BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT A GOOD PROVIDER. YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW IT, ELMER I'M NOT SATISFIED... NOT AT ALL SATISFIED. I THOUGHT YOU HAD AMBITION! I THOUGHT YOU'D GO PLACES... GET AHEAD IN THE WORLD. INSTEAD, YOU'RE STUCK IN A POOR PAYING JOB

IDA SPOKE BITTERLY AND LOUDLY... LOUD ENOUGH FOR HER PARENTS TO HEAR. THEY ACCEPTED IT AS AN INVITATION TO JOIN HER FIERCE HARANGUE !

SOMETIMES I WISH IDA HADN'T... WELL, I'D BETTER NOT SAY WHAT I'M THINKING!

I THOUGHT YOU HAD GUTS, SON! I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO GET AHEAD!

'DRIVEN MORE BY DESPERATION AND DEBT THAN BY THEIR SCORN, I FINALLY GATHERED THE COURAGE TO ASK MY BOSS, MR. BENTLY, FOR A RAISE. BUT THE MINUTE I ENTERED HIS PLUSH OFFICE ...

I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT YOUR WORK, PRESTON. YOU'VE BEEN GETTING CARE-LESS LATELY... SLOPPY... VERY SLOPPY!

I... I DIDN'T REALIZE, MR BENTLY! I'M SORRY, SIR! I'LL DO BETTER IN THE FUTURE! I PROMISE!

'I HAD UNCORKED A DAM BY COMPLAINING AGAINST IDA'S FOLKS, AND FROM THAT DAY ON, A SPITEFUL TORRENT OF CRITICISM POURED THROUGH THE FLOODGATES AT ME...

WHAT ABOUT THAT RAISE I TOLD YOU TO ASK FOR, ELMER? WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET ENOUGH NERVE?

ASK FOR? YOU DON'T ASK FOR A RAISE! YOU DEMAND IT! THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET AHEAD... BY DEMANDING...



'HOW COULD I TELL THEM MR BENTLY HAD MORE THAN REFUSED ME A RAISE? THEY GAVE ME NO PEACE. FROM THE MOMENT I CAME HOME FROM WORK...

WELL, ELMER? HOW'D YOU MAKE OUT? DID YOU TELL THAT BOSS OF YOURS TO COME ACROSS OR GET A NEW BOY?

I TOLD HIM NOTHING, MR WALLACE. NOBODY TALKS THAT WAY TO MR. BENTLY!



'...AND I'D ALWAYS GET THE SAME RESPONSE.

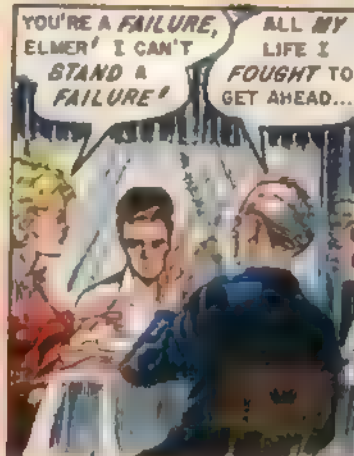
YOU DIDN'T. GOOD LORD, MAN! DON'T YOU WANT TO GET AHEAD IN THIS WORLD?!



'EVERY MEAL BECAME A NIGHTMARE, FROM THE TIME I'D SIT DOWN...

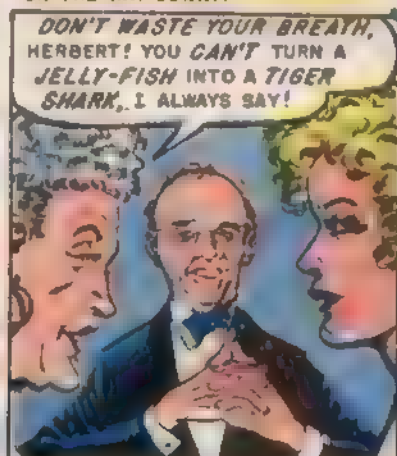
YOU'RE A FAILURE, ELMER! I CAN'T STAND A FAILURE!

ALL MY LIFE I FOUGHT TO GET AHEAD...



'I'D FORCE MYSELF TO EAT, AND THE TASTELESS FOOD WOULD SOUR ON THE WAY DOWN.'

DON'T WASTE YOUR BREATH, HERBERT! YOU CAN'T TURN A JELLY-FISH INTO A TIGER SHARK, I ALWAYS SAY!



'SUDDENLY THERE'D BE A VIOLENT CHURNING IN THE PIT OF MY STOMACH AND I'D HAVE TO RUN FROM THE ROOM...

GO ON! RUN! IF I WERE IN YOUR SHOES, I WOULDN'T WANT TO HEAR THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF, EITHER!

SEE? YOU TRY TO TELL HIM SOMETHING FOR HIS OWN GOOD AND HE RUNS OFF IN A HUFF! HE'S INSULTED!

GAGGAGGHH!



'I'D MAKE IT TO THE BATHROOM MOST OF THE TIME...AND ALL BUT HEAVE UP MY INSIDES.'

YOU MARRIED A REAL LEMON, IDA!

HE'LL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING!

CHOKED...



'NOR DID THE TORMENT STOP WHEN WE WENT TO BED. IDA HAD NAG ME TILL SHE WAS HOARSE, AND I'D COVER MY HEAD WITH MY PILLOW, BUT I'D STILL HEAR.'

ONLY SIXTY-SEVEN MISERABLE DOLLARS A WEEK...IN THESE DAYS. I'M ASHAMED FOR MOTHER AND DADDY TO KNOW...BUT OF COURSE THEY DO KNOW. THEY KNOW THE KIND OF CLOTHES I WEAR...THEY SEE THE FURNITURE...
THREADBARE...JUNK!

PLEASE...
IDA! IT'S LATE...



'WHEN I'D HEARD ALL I COULD STAND, I'D HURRY FROM THE LIVING ROOM...'

NEVER MIND, MOTHER! FROM NOW ON, I'LL DO THE BUYING! WE CAN'T AFFORD MUCH, MAYBE, BUT WHAT WE DO GET WILL BE THE BEST!



'EVEN A LOCKED DOOR WAS NO GUARANTEE OF PRIVACY...'

ARE YOU GOING TO STAY IN THERE ALL NIGHT, ELMER? LISTEN...ABOUT THE T.V. SET! I WAS DOWNTOWN TODAY, TALKING TO A DEALER ABOUT A TRADE-IN ON A LARGER SCREEN, AND...



'I WAS TOO TIMID TO ADMIT IT TO MYSELF THEN, BUT I'D COME TO HATE IDA AND HER MOTHER AND FATHER. I'D BE SHAVING IN THE MORNING AND MY WIFE WOULD COME IN AND THE DAY'S NAGGING WOULD BEGIN...'

I DON'T SEE WHY DADDY SHOULD HAVE TO KEEP POUNDING IT INTO YOU! YOU SHOULD WANT TO GET AHEAD YOURSELF, ELMER...



'THIS MORNING, AS ALWAYS, WE SAT AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE AND I LISTENED TO THEM TALKING, TALKING, AND NEARBY, THE STORM GATHERED. I COULD HEAR IT RUMBLING...'

A MAN WITHOUT AMBITION IS A WALKING CORPSE, ELMER! I KNOW I'M REPEATING MYSELF, BUT TRY TO BE A SUCCESS. TRY, ELMER. ELMER? YOU LISTENING?

HUH? OH, YES! YES, I'LL TRY!



'SO THE MONTHS DRAGGED INTO YEARS AND THE WALLACES STAYED ON WITH US, NAGGING ME, MOUNDING, COMPLAINING ALWAYS COMPLAINING.'

YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU BOUGHT THAT WASHING MACHINE? I TOLD YOU IT DIDN'T PAY TO BUY CHEAP! WELL, IT'S READY FOR THE JUNKHEAP!

IT WON'T GET LONELY THERE, BELIEVE ME. IT'LL HAVE THAT STINKING TWELVE-INCH-SCREEN T.V. SET FOR COMPANY

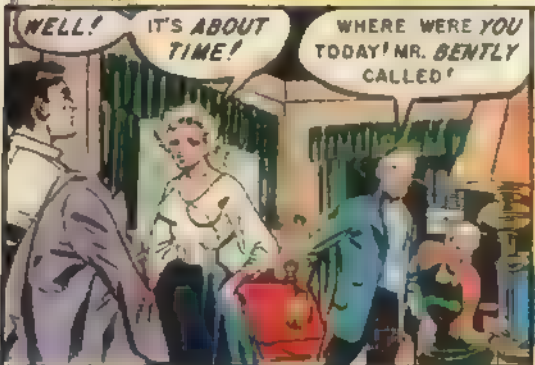


'AND TODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS, I DIDN'T GO TO WORK. I WANDERED AROUND THE STREETS, WONDERING WHAT WAS WRONG WITH ME, LISTENING TO THE STORM THUNDERING IN THE DISTANCE, COMING CLOSER...CLOSER...READY TO BREAK AT ANY MOMENT.'

WHY DON'T I GET AHEAD? EVERYBODY ELSE DOES! I'VE GOT TO! I'VE...HEH...HEH... I'VE...EH...EH...



WHEN I GOT HOME THAT NIGHT, LATE FOR DINNER, THEY JUST STARED AT ME...IDA AND MR. WALLACE AND MRS. WALLACE, THE STORM RUMBLER AROUND...THREATENING...THREATENING TO BREAK...THERE...IN MY THROBBING HEAD...AND I JUST STARED BACK AT THEM...



WELL!

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

WHERE WERE YOU TODAY! MR. BENTLY CALLED!

THEN, SUDDENLY, THE STORM TORE LOOSE...HOWLING...SCREAMING-BLACK AROUND ME...THUNDERING...WILD TEMPEST-FURY AND ABOVE THE STORM, THEIR VOICES...THEIR NASTY VOICES...



IS THAT THE WAY TO TRY TO GET AHEAD...STAY HOME FROM WORK?

YOU SAID YOU'D TRY TO GET AHEAD, ELMER!

WHY CAN'T YOU GET AHEAD, ELMER?

I RAN OUT...BUT NOT TO THE BATHROOM THIS TIME. I RAN TO THE KITCHEN...THROUGH THE RAGING STORM, I CAME BACK WITH THE MEAT CLEAVER...



ELMER!

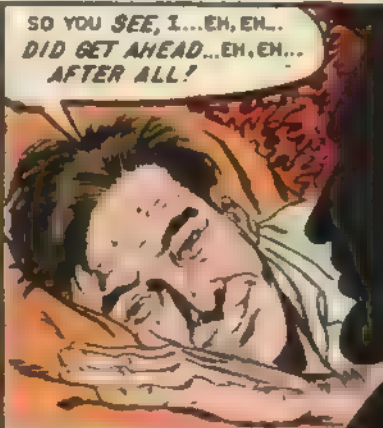
THE STORM SHRIEKED IN MY BRAIN. WHITE BLINDING LIGHTNING FLASHES EXPLODED. THE BLACK FURY TURNED RED RED...SPORTING RED AS I SWUNG THE CLEAVER...



ELMER!

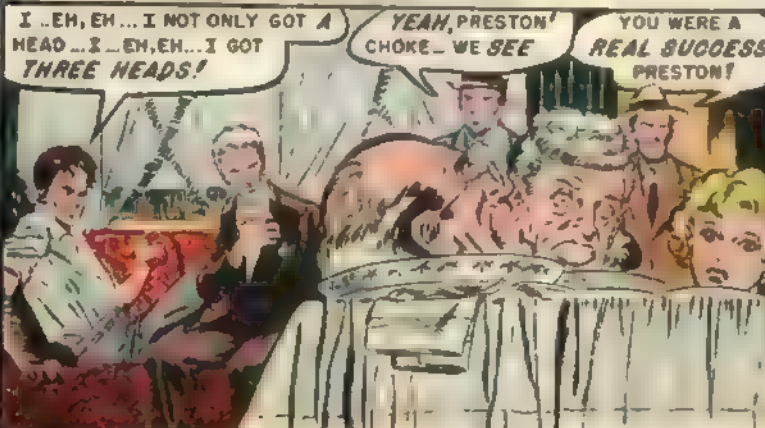
YAAAAAH!

ELMER PRESTON STARED STRAIGHT AHEAD, SMILING. THE WILD GLEAM RETURNED TO HIS EYES, AND HE ENDED OUT WITH THREE SHORT, HIGH-PITCHED BURSTS OF LAUGHTER...



SO YOU SEE, I...EH, EH... DID GET AHEAD...EH, EH... AFTER ALL!

AND SLOWLY, THE POLICEMEN FOLLOWED ELMER'S WILD GAZE TO THE DINNER TABLE...TO THE MEAT PLACE SETTINGS...AND THE PLATES WITH THEIR HARROWING FARE STARING BACK AT THEM...



I...EH, EH...I NOT ONLY GOT A HEAD...I...EH, EH...I GOT THREE HEADS!

YEAH, PRESTON! CHOKED...WE SEE

YOU WERE A REAL SUCCESS, PRESTON!

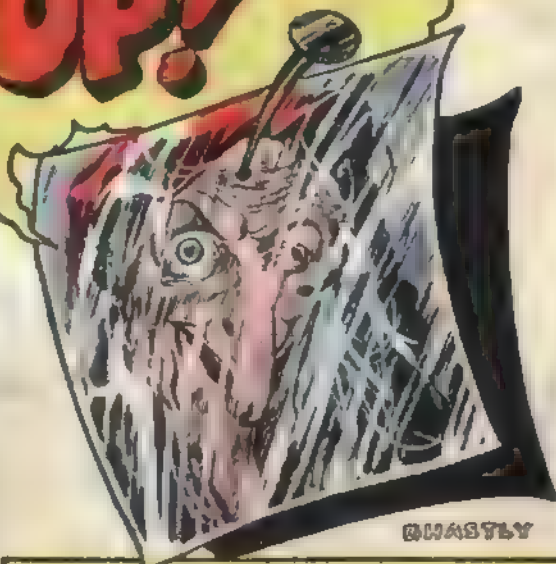
HEH, HEH. A TRIPLE HEADER, EH, KIDDIES? SO, IDA AND HER FOLKS DROVE ELMER BATS, BUT THEY WENT OUT ON STRIKES...IN ONE, TWO, THREE ORDER...ALL RIGHT OVER THE PLATE. WELL, THE GAME'S OVER NOW, CALLED ON ACCOUNT OF MENTAL STORM! AND YOU AND I WILL TAKE A RAIN-CHECK TILL NEXT WE MEET. HOPE YOU LIKED MY NEW MAG. NOW THE OLD WITCH AWAITS TO WIND UP THE FIENDISH ACTIVITIES. THIS IS YOUR CRYPT-KEEPER, BIDDING YOU GOOD-BYE AND WISHING YOU NOTHING BUT THE BEST...NIGHTMARE!



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! AND NOW IT'S *WIND-UP* SPOT IN C K'S NEW *GREEPS* COMIC, AND YOUR *SHIVER-CHEF*, THE OLD WITCH, IS READY TO STIR UP HER *CRUDDY CAULDRON* AND LADLE OUT A *LURID LITERARY LUNCHEON*. THIS TASTY TALE OF *TERROR-TREMORS* IS TOLD BY ONE *TONY BARRETT*. LISTEN, NOW, AS HE GASPS OUT THE *DELIRIUM DISH* HE CALLS...

TATTER UP!



GHASTLY

ME? I'M *TONY BARRETT*. I'M NOT A *BAD-LOOKIN'* GUY. I'M *YOUNG, TOO*. THIRTY-FOUR. OKAY, SO *HOW* COULD I COULD SIT AROUND ON A *ROT-REEKIN' COUCH*, *HOLDIN' HANDS* WITH A *SNAGGLE-TOOTHED HAG* NAMED *FANNY OGDEN*? *HOW* COULD I COULD *STAND* THE *MILDEW-YELLOWED WALL PAPERS...* THE *CRACKED* *CEILINGS...* THE *WHOLE HOUSE STINKIN'* LIKE THE *INSIDE* OF A *DUG-UP COFFIN...* AND THE *STINK* OF *FANNY HERSELF*? YEAH, *THAT'S RIGHT!* YOU GOT THE *PICTURE!* *FANNY OGDEN* WAS SUPPOSED TO BE *LOADED!*...

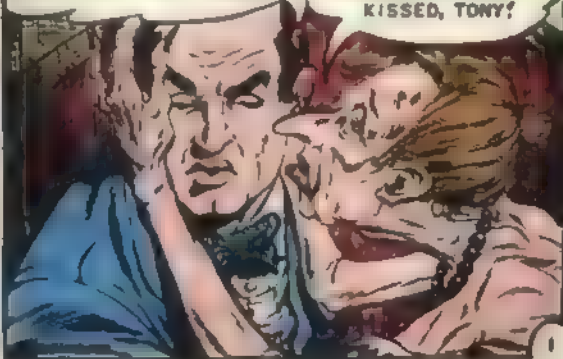
I...I BEEN MEANIN' T' ASK YOU, FANNY, I JUS' DON'T KNOW *HOW!* I... I BEEN MEANIN' T' ASK YOU IF YOU'LL *MARRY* ME!

OH, TONY! I'VE BEEN *PRAYING* YOU'D ASK ME... *DREAMING* OF IT... BUT NEVER REALLY *BELIEVING* YOU WOULD! OH, *YES*, TONY! *YES!* I *WILL* MARRY YOU!

SURE I *WANTED* THAT *WOEBEGONE* WITCH FOR A WIFE. I *WANTED* TO MARRY THE *HUNDRED GRAND FORTUNE* I'D HEARD ABOUT...THE *DOUGH* HER *FIRST HUSBAND* HAD LEFT HER. THE *MISERABLE* *MISER* WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE *EVERY LAST CENT* OF IT...*HID...THERE...* IN THAT *FOUL-SMELLING* *FILTHY* HOUSE...

THEN I GUESS...*CHOKE...* THIS CALLS FOR A *KISS!*

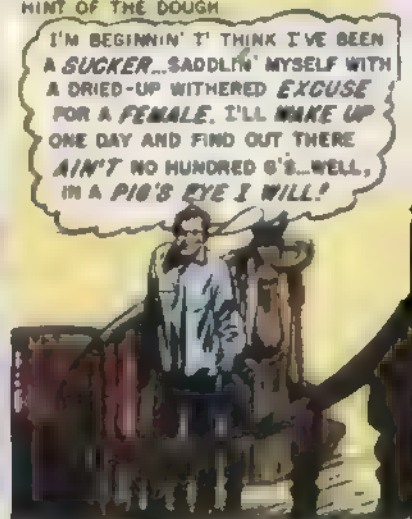
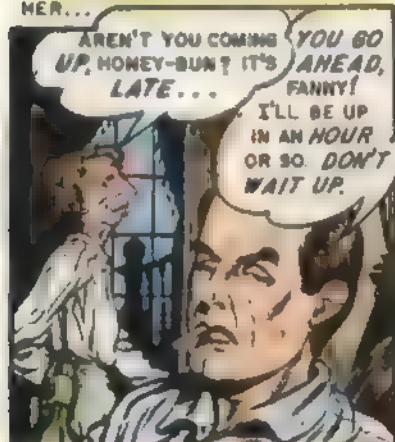
IT'S BEEN SO *LONG* SINCE I'VE BEEN *KISSED*, TONY!



WELL, I'LL SKIP THE DISGUSTIN' DETAILS EXCEPT TO SAY THAT FANNY BECAME MRS. TONY BARRETT, AND I STARTED HITTIN' THE BOTTLE TO BRACE MYSELF AGAINST LIVIN' WITH HER...

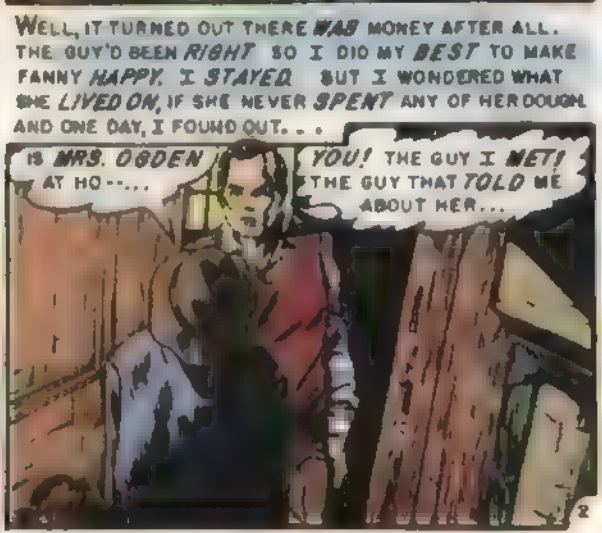
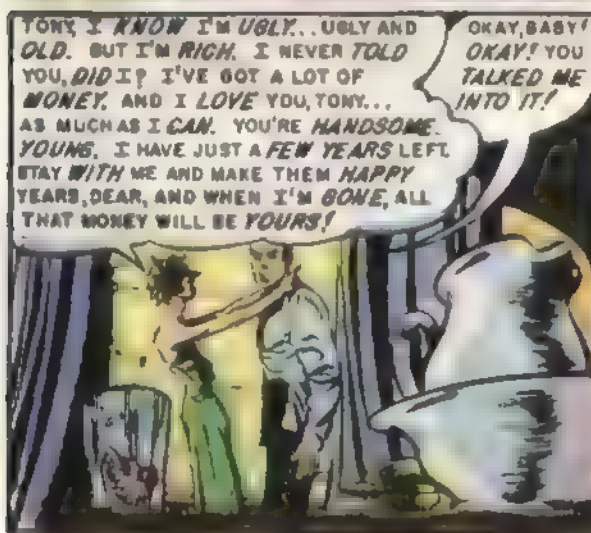
TRouble WITH DRINKIN' WAS IT USED TO GET ME DOWN. I'D WORRY. I'D WORRY REAL BAD...

AFTER THE FIRST TWO WEEKS, I GOT REAL DISGUSTED. THERE WAS NO HINT OF THE DOUGH



SO I WENT UP INTO THE BEDROOM WHERE FANNY SAT WITH THAT STRAGGLY MOP OF HERS UP IN CURLERS. BUT I DIDN'T LOOK AT FANNY TWICE. I HEADED FOR THE CLOSET...FOR MY SUITCASE...

I BOUNCED MY SUITCASE ONTO THE BED AND TOSSED MY CLOTHES INTO IT. MY BRIDE JUMPED UP LIKE A BEE'D STUNG HER, AND SHE THREW HER BONEY ARMS AROUND ME...





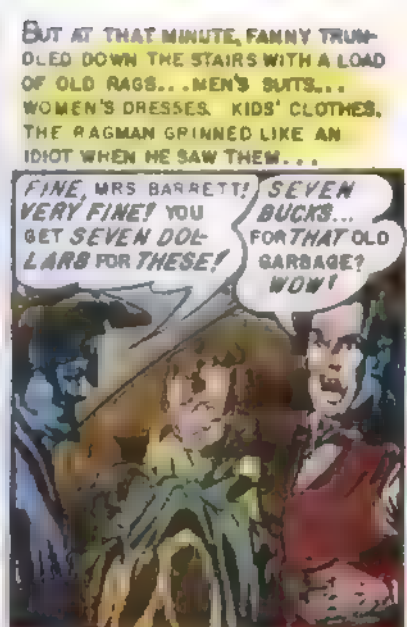
I'M A RAGMAN! MRS. OGDEN ALWAYS SELLS ME HER OLD RAGS...

MRS. OGDEN IS MRS. BARRETT NOW, MISTER. MY WIFE! DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME? YOU TOLD ME ABOUT HER...



YOU HAVE A NICE WIFE, SIR. SHE'S VERY GOOD TO ME. SHE ALWAYS HAS RAGS TO SELL ME. I'M A RAGMAN.

MAYBE I'M WRONG BUT I COULD SWEAR IT WAS YOU I MET THAT NIGHT...



BUT AT THAT MINUTE, FANNY TRUM-
OLED DOWN THE STAIRS WITH A LOAD
OF OLD RAGS... MEN'S SUITS...
WOMEN'S DRESSES. KIDS' CLOTHES.
THE RAGMAN GRINNED LIKE AN
IDIOT WHEN HE SAW THEM...

FINE, MRS. BARRETT! VERY FINE! YOU GET SEVEN DOL-
LARS FOR THESE!

SEVEN BUCKS... FOR THAT OLD GARBAGE? WOW!

THE OLD CREEP STOPPED COLD AND GAVE ME A FISHY STARE, LIKE I'D INSULTED HIM. FANNY TRIED TO COVER UP...



TONY DIDN'T MEAN ANY-
THING. HE JUST DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.

YEAH, MAC. NO HARD FEELINGS! IF YOU WANT TO OVERPAY, IT'S YOUR BUSINESS...

YOUR WIFE HAS BEEN GOOD TO ME... AND I TRY TO BE GOOD TO HER. HERE YOU ARE, MRS. OGD... MRS. BARRETT!

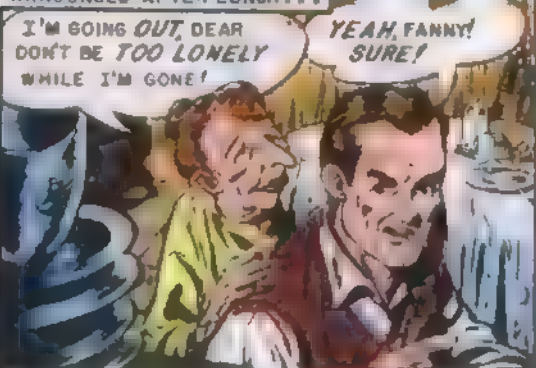
AFTER THE RAGMAN PAID FANNY, HE LEFT. I FELT PRETTY SICK INSIDE... YOU CAN IMAGINE...



WHAT'S WITH THIS RAG BUSINESS, BABY? WHERE DO YOU GET THEM?

WHY I PICK THEM UP, TONY... HERE AND THERE...

NICE, HUH? BEIN MARRIED TO AN OLD HAG WASN'T ENOUGH! NOW I HAD TO FIND OUT SHE WAS A RAG-PICKER BESIDES. THAT WAS THE LAST STRAW. I'D MADE UP MY MIND WHEN FANNY ANNOUNCED AFTER LUNCH...



I'M GOING OUT, DEAR. DON'T BE TOO LONELY WHILE I'M GONE!

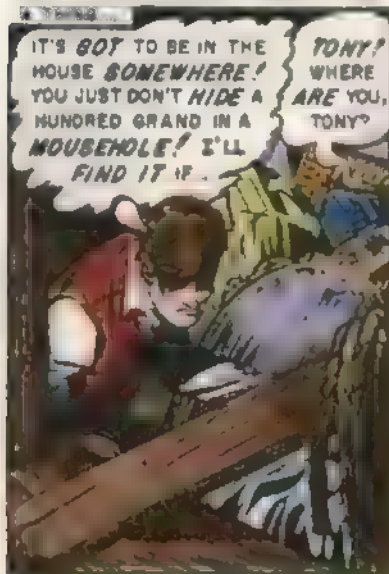
YEAH, FANNY! SURE!

FANNY DIDN'T SAY WHAT SHE WAS GOIN OUT FOR BUT I KNEW IT WAS TO DO SOME RAG-PICKIN' WELL THAT WAS OKAY WITH ME. THAT GAVE ME TIME TO RUMMAGE THROUGH THE RUBBLE-CRAMMED ATTIC AFTER SOME PICKIN'S OF MY OWN...



I GOT TO FIND THAT DOUGH! I GOT TO FIND THAT DOUGH AND GET AWAY! ME MARRIED TO A TOAD-FACED RAG-PICKER! I'LL GO NUTS IF I HAVE T'KEEP ON LIVIN' WITH HER!

I TURNED THAT ATTIC UPSIDE DOWN BUT IT WAS NO SOAP I DIDN'T FIND



IT'S GOT TO BE IN THE HOUSE SOMEWHERE! YOU JUST DON'T HIDE A HUNDRED GRAND IN A MOUSEHOLE! I'LL FIND IT IF...

TONY! WHERE ARE YOU, TONY?

IT WAS FANNIE...CALLIN' ME. I WENT DOWN AND GOT NAUSEOUS LOOKIN' AT HER...THAT PATCHED AND FADED DRESS. THE TWO DIFFERENT COLORED COTTON STOCK-IN'S...AND ON HER FEET...NO KIDDIN'...SNEAKERS. SHE HAD A DIRTY SACK STUFFED FULL OVER HER SHOULDER...

LOOKS LIKE HUNTIN' WAS PRETTY GOOD TODAY, FANNY. HOW MUCH YOU GOT...EIGHT BUCKS WORTH...MAYBE TEN?

WHERE WERE YOU, TONY?



I COULDN'T STAND THE MESS AROUND THIS HOUSE ANY MORE. SO I STARTED CLEANIN' UP...IN THE ATTIC

IN THE ATTIC! OH, WELL, THAT'S NICE...



FANNY DIDN'T SEEM DISTURBED ABOUT ME NOSIN AROUND UP IN THE ATTIC, SO I FIGURED THAT'S NOT WHERE THE HUNDRED B'S WAS STASHED AWAY. I WAS ALL ON EDGE WAITIN' FOR HER TO GO OUT AGAIN SO'S I COULD START LOOKIN' SOMEWHERE ELSE. BUT FIRST THE RAGMAN TURNED UP...



I COULD SWEAR HE'S THE SAME GUY THAT TOLD ME ABOUT FANNY

SUCH NICE RAGS, MRS. BARRETT. SUCH BEAUTIFUL RAGS

AFTER A WHILE I GOT MAD AND RIPPED OPEN THE MATTRESS ON THE OLD BRASS BED. I WAS SO BUSY, I DIDN'T HEAR FANNY SNEAK UPSTAIRS AND CREEP INTO THE ROOM LIKE A SCRAWNY OLD CAT. BUT SUD- DENLY I FELT HER THERE



FANNY! I...

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE STILL CLEANING UP, TONY

FINALLY FANNY LEFT WITH HER RAGSACK AND I WENT TO WORK ON ONE OF THE UPSTAIRS ROOMS, FEELIN' THROUGH BATTERED MOTH-EATEN FURNITURE, PLOWIN' THROUGH THE TRASH-STUFFED CLOSET



IT'LL TAKE ME MONTHS TO FIND THAT DOUGH A YEAR, MAYBE...UNLESS I'M LUCKY

I COULD TELL SHE KNEW WHAT I WAS UP TO, 'CAUSE SHE HAD A SMILE INSIDE THAT GLINTED THROUGH HER EYES. SHE WAS LAUGHIN' IN HER GUTS 'CAUSE I COULDN'T FIND HER HOARD AND IT MADE ME MAD



YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I'M DOIN' CLEANIN' UP THIS FILTHY PIGSTY! MAYBE YOU DON'T LIKE THAT..

I SAID I'M GLAD, MONEY..

THAT'S HOW IT WENT FOR WEEKS, EVERY DAY THAT RAGMAN CAME AND GOT PRACTICALLY DELIRIOUS OVER SOME FOUL RAGS MY WIFE SOLD HIM...



AND EVERY DAY, AFTER SHE WENT OUT SCROUNGIN' THROUGH LORD-KNOWS-WHAT TRASH FOR RAGS, I PLUNGED INTO MY TREASURE HUNT...



AND SHE'D COME BACK... KNOWIN' WHAT I WAS UP TO, BUT I DIDN'T GIVE A HANG EXCEPT THAT SHE WAS ALL THE TIME LAUGHIN' AT ME AND I'D GET ALL CHOKED UP WITH HATE FOR HER...



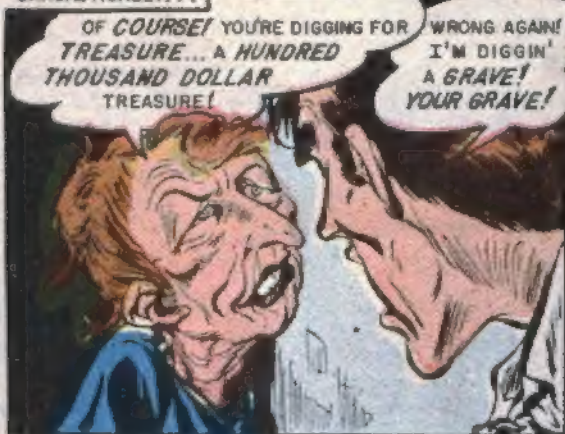
FINALLY I COULDN'T TAKE IT NO MORE. I COULDN'T STAND FANNIE BIVIN' ME THE HORSE-LAUGH. I COULDN'T STAND LOOKIN' AT HER. SO ONE DAY, I WENT DOWN THE CELLAR AND STARTED DIGGIN'... BUT NOT FOR HER MONEY.



AND WHEN SHE GOT HOME THAT DAY, I LISTENED TO HER CALL ME, BUT I DIDN'T ANSWER. I MADE SOME NOISE AND WAITED...



FANNIE LOOKED AT ME REAL COLD LIKE AND WHISPERED SARCASTICALLY...



FANNY COULD SEE BY MY FACE I WAS LEVELIN'. IT WAS LIKE SHE'D NEVER EXPECTED THIS TURN OF EVENTS. SHE LET OUT A LITTLE SQUEAL AND STARTED TO RUN. I SWUNG THE PICK HARD...



THE PICK HOOKED HER DEEP IN HER BACK AND SHE HIT THE CELLAR FLOOR LIKE AN OLD LOG. THEN I WENT TO WORK ON THAT FACE... THAT AWFUL UGLY FACE. IT WAS JUST SOMETHIN' I HAD TO DO... LIKE I WAS GETTIN' EVEN FOR HAVIN' DEGRADED MYSELF BY MAKIN' LOVE TO IT ALL THOSE MONTHS...

UH...UHH...UHHH...UHHH...



I WAS DOG-TIRED FROM WHAT I'D DONE SO I HIT THE HAY EARLY THAT NIGHT AND SLEPT UNTIL I HEARD A KNOCK ON THE FRONT DOOR. IT WAS THE RAGMAN...

LOOK, PAL. MY WIFE TOOK OFF ON A LONG TRIP. SHE WON'T BE BACK FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. COME BACK THEN, HUH?

CAN'T YOU SELL ME SOME RAGS?



I WAS READY TO SLAM THE DOOR IN HIS FACE BUT, JUST TO GET RID OF THE PEST, I DRAGGED DOWN SOME OLD TOWELS FROM A CLOSET. HE DIDN'T SEEM HAPPY WITH THEM...

THESE AREN'T VERY NICE RAGS, MR. BARRETT! I CAN'T PAY YOU MUCH FOR THEM...

FORGET IT, PAL! TAKE 'EM... AS A GIFT! NOW, GO AWAY AND DON'T BOTHER ME!



I SPENT DAYS COMBIN' THROUGH THE REST OF THE HOUSE. I EVEN TORE UP THE KITCHEN, SMASHED APART THE OLD STOVE. NO DOUGH! IT WAS GETTIN' ME DOWN...

IT'S GOT TO BE HERE... SOMEWHERE! IT'S GOT TO! I CAN'T QUIT! I CAN'T...



AND TO TOP IT ALL OFF, THAT CRUMMY CREEP KEPT COMIN' BACK, TILL THIS MORNIN', I FLIPPED MY LID...

I'VE BEEN OVER THIS DUMP FROM ATTIC TO CELLAR! I GAVE YOU EVERY RAG I COULD FIND! I GOT NO MORE RAGS! NOW, FOR GOD'S SAKE, LEAVE ME ALONE!

MRS. BARRETT WOULD HAVE RAGS FOR ME...



AFTER I FINISHED I DUMPED HER BLOODY BODY INTO THE GRAVE AND COVERED THE WHOLE THING OVER WITH DIRT...

WELL, BABY! I GUESS YOU KNOW WHO GOT THE LAST LAUGH NOW...



NOW I'M A GUY WITH A STRONG CONSCIENCE, SO WHAT WITH THE RAGMAN PESTERIN' ME AND FANNY LAYIN' DEAD IN THE CELLAR, I COULDN'T SLEEP TONIGHT. AROUND MID-NIGHT OR SO, I HEARD A NOISE IN THE HOUSE. I GOT A GUN OUT OF MY SUITCASE AND WENT DOWNSTAIRS FOR A LOOK...



THE ~~ONE~~ I WAS COMIN' FROM THE CELLAR. I WENT DOWN. IT WAS HIM AGAIN... IN MY HOUSE... NOSIN' AROUND...



I TOLD YOU I GOT NO MORE RAGS! NOW...

BUT YOU DO! NICE RAGS! THE CLOTHES... ON HER!

HE WAS POINTIN' TO FANNY'S GRAVE. HE KNEW I'D KILLED HER. AND I KNEW THEN I'D HAVE TO KILL HIM. I PULLED THE TRIGGER... ONCE... TWICE... HE DIDN'T EVEN WINCE...

I COULDN'T MISS AT SUCH CLOSE RANGE! I HIT YOU TWICE... I CAN SEE THE HOLES!...

I LOVED HER, MR. BARRETT! I WANTED HER TO BE HAPPY! I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS!



I EMPTIED THE GUN AT HIM... FOUR MORE SHOTS... BUT HE JUST STOOD THERE...

SHE NEEDED MORE THAN I COULD GIVE HER... SOMEONE YOUNG... SOMEONE LIKE YOU! THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU ABOUT HER MONEY! I WANTED HER TO BE HAPPY!

DIE! I SHOT YOU SIX TIMES! DIE ALREADY!



I KEPT STARIN' STUPIDLY AT THE SIX HOLES BURNED INTO HIS CHEST. THEN I SNATCHED UP THE PICK. I SWUNG IT, CATCHIN' HIM BELOW THE SHOULDER... SINKIN' IT INTO HIS BACK...



YOU'RE NOT HUMAN! YOU'RE NOT! THERE'S NO BLOOD! YOU'RE NOT EVEN FLESH AND BONE!

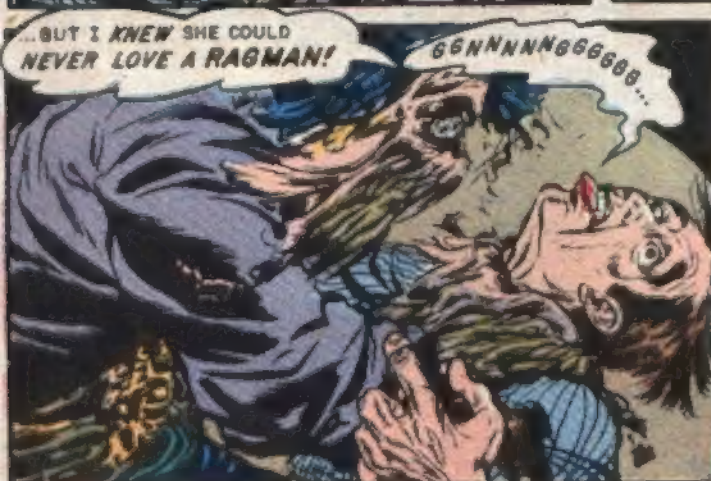
OF COURSE NOT, MR. BARRETT...

HE LEAPED AT ME, WRAPPING HIS HANDS AROUND MY THROAT... FUNNY KIND OF HANDS, SOFT AND STRINGY-LIKE. HE KEPT CHOKIN' ME... CUTTIN' OFF MY AIR. I TORE AT HIS BODY, TRYIN' T' MAKE HIM LOSE HIS HOLD, AND MY HANDS CAME AWAY WITH CHUNKS OF SOFT FOUL-SMELLING...



RAGS! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT... CHOKER... RAGS!

THAT'S WHY I SENT YOU TO HER! SHE NEEDED MORE THAN ME! I LOVED HER...



...BUT I KNEW SHE COULD NEVER LOVE A RAGMAN!

66NNNN66666...

SHE'S DIGGIN' THAT RAG-TIME MUSIC, NO DOUBT, TONY! WELL, DON'T FEEL BAD! NOW THAT YOU'RE DEAD... YOU WON'T HAVE TO DIG IT! THEY'LL DIG YOU... A GRAVE, THAT IS! WELL, KIDDIES... NEXT TIME YOU HEAR THE OLD EXPRESSION... 'CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN!'... REMEMBER THE RAGMAN! OLD CLOTHES DIDN'T... IN HIS CASE! WELL, I'VE GOT TO BE SHOVELING OFF! HOPE YOU ENJOYED

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S NEW MORBID MUCK-MAG. WE THREE GHOULUNATICS WILL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY PUTRID PERIODICAL, THE HAUNT OF FEAR! TILL THEN, KEEP A STIFF...!



EVERYTHIN'S GOIN' RED AND BLACK NOW. I HEAR A FUNNY KIND OF MUSIC IN MY HEAD... AND LAUGHIN'... I HEAR FANNY LAUGHIN'...

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Yours
FREE!

I'll Give You This Feature Assortment of 21 New, Lovely Christmas Cards Free To Prove How Easily You Can Earn

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Name

Address

City & Zone State

If for fund-raising, give organization's name below

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Mail coupon for money-making sample outfit **ON APPROVAL** Get Feature Assortment as a **FREE GIFT** for trying our plan.

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